

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONROVIA 3998

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: N: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, US, LI

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT TOLBERT RE FONMINISTER'S REMARKS AT
FOURTH OF JULY RECEPTION

REF: STATE 162412

1. I WAS SUMMONED TO THE EXECUTIVE MANSION FOR MEETING WITH
PRESIDENT TOLBERT AT 10 A.M. JULY 11. I WAS ACCOMPANIED BY DCM
AND AID DIRECTOR. ALSO PRESENT WERE FONMINISTER DENNIS, ASST.
FONMINISTER DUNN, MINISTER FOR PRESIDENTIAL AFFAIRS TOWNSEND AND
DEPUTY MIN FOR PRES. AFFAIRS HOLDER. PRESIDENT TOLBERT SAID HE
WISHED TO DISCUSS WITH ME THE REMARKS MADE BY HIS FOREIGN
MINISTER AT MY FOURTH OF JULY RECEPTION. HE SAID THE FONMINISTER
HAD REPORTED TO HIM FULLY ON HIS REMARKS AT THE RECEPTION AND
SUBSEQUENT MEETING WITH ME AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. HE THEN
ASKED HOLDER TO READ TO ME THE TEXT OF A LETTER HE HAD SENT TO
THE FONMINISTER. THE LETTER SAID IN SUBSTANCE THAT PRESIDENT
TOLBERT DID NOT APPROVE OF THE REMARKS MADE BY THE FONMINISTER AT
THE RECEPTION. THE PRESIDENT CONSIDERED THE REMARKS UNTIMELY AND
UNHELPFUL. THE LETTER FURTHER STATED THAT THERE IS A TIME AND
PLACE FOR EVERYTHING AND THE FOURTH OF JULY RECEPTION WAS NOT
THE OCCASION OR THE PLACE TO MAKE COMMENTS ON US/LIBERIAN
RELATIONS IN THE VEIN DENNIS HAD DONE.

2. PRESIDENT TOLBERT THEN REFERRED TO MY MEETING WITH DENNIS AT
THE FONMINISTRY AND OBSERVED THAT, IF DENNIS' REPORT TO HIM WAS
CORRECT, BOTH OF US HAD INDULGED IN HARSH WORDS. HE SAID HE DID
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NOT WISH HIS FONMINISTER TO EVER INDULGE IN THIS TYPE OF DISCOURSE

WITH THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR. AS FOR ME, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN PREFERABLE HAD I NOT RESPONDED BUT RATHER HAD REPORTED THE INCIDENT DIRECTLY TO HIM FOR APPROPRIATE ACTION. I THANKED THE PRESIDENT FOR HIS STATEMENT AND TOLD HIM THAT I WAS PREPARED TO LET BYGONES BE BYGONES AND STRONGLY DESIRED TO RETURN TO THE SAME CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP I HAD ENJOYED WITH DENNIS IN THE PAST. I ROSE AND SHOOK HANDS WITH DENNIS AT THIS POINT. DENNIS RECIPROCATED MY DESIRE TO FORGET THE EVENT AND TO RETURN TO OUR FORMER RELATIONSHIP.

3. I THEN MENTIONED TO THE PRESIDENT THAT THE THRUST OF DENNIS' REMARKS HAD BEEN THAT THE US HAD FAILED TO PROVIDE ADEQUATED AID FOR LIBERIA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. I NOTED THAT WE WERE ALL AWARE THAT LIBERIA NEEDS MORE EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT. HOWEVER, THE US HAD TO OPERATE WITHIN THE AMOUNT OF FUNDS APPROPRIATED BY THE CONGRESS, WITHIN GUIDELINES LAID DOWN BY THE CONGRESS, AND WITHIN THE AMOUNT OF FUNDS ALLOCATED FOR AFRICAN PROGRAMS. I PERSONALLY FELT THAT WE HAD BEEN MOST SUCCESSFUL IN OBTAINING FUNDING FOR LIBERIAN PROJECTS IN THE PAST AND HOPED TO BE ABLE TO BE AS EFFECTIVE IN THE FUTURE. I NOTED THAT I HAD SUGGESTED TO DENNIS THAT IF HE HAD SPECIFIC CONCERNS OVER US AID MATTERS THAT WE SIT DOWN WITH THE MIN OF FINANCE AND THE MIN OF PLANNING AND REVIEW THE ENTIRE AID PICTURE INCLUDING OUR TENTATIVE PLANS FOR FUTURE YEARS. I FURTHER SUGGESTED THAT DENNIS CALL ME IF HE DESIRED SUCH A MEETING. THE PRESIDENT REPLIED THAT HE WAS NOT CONCERNED WITH AID PROGRAMS. HE SAID THE US HAS EVERY RIGHT TO GIVE ITS AID TO WHOM IT WANTS, WHEN IT WANTS AND IN THE AMOUNT IT WANTS. HE FELT IF HE DID NOT RECEIVE AID THIS YEAR, HE WAS LIKELY TO RECEIVE SOME NEXT YEAR. HE SAID AID MATTERS SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE HANDLED IN THE NORMAL MANNER (WHICH IMPLIED TO ME THAT HE DID NOT WISH DENNIS TO BE INJECTED INTO THE AID PICTURE). IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE PRESIDENT DID NOT WISH TO GET INTO THE SUBSTANCE OF DENNIS' REMARKS NOR TO DISCUSS AID MATTERS.

4. IN CLOSING I THANKED THE PRESIDENT FOR HIS STATEMENT AND ASSURED HIM OF MY SINCERE DESIRE TO COOPERATE WITH HIM IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY.

5. COMMENT: THIS CLOSES THE AFFAIR FOR US AND, WE BELIEVE,
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FOR PRESIDENT TOLBERT. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE OUTCOME WILL AFFECT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH DENNIS OR HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD US.
MANFULL

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